
Government of the District of Columbia



DC Department of Public Works

Testimony of
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Director

Public Oversight Hearing
Department of Public Works

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Committee on Public Works and the Environment
Carol Schwartz, Chair
Council of the District of Columbia

John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004



**Public Oversight Hearing on Fiscal Year 2005 Spending and
The Status of Fiscal Year 2006 Program Implementation
February 22, 2006**

Good morning, Madam Chair and members of the committee. I am William O. Howland, Jr., Director of the DC Department of Public Works (DPW).

With me are members of my senior staff – Tom Henderson, Solid Waste Management Administrator; Patricia Robinson, Fleet Management Administrator; Fabian Lewis, Parking Services Associate Administrator; and from the Office of the chief Financial Officer, Andree Chan-Mann, our Agency Fiscal Officer.

Today, we are pleased to share with you, on behalf of the Administration, an overview of DPW's activities during FY 2005 and our progress so far this fiscal year. Afterward, we will be happy to respond to your questions.

FY 2005 was a strong year for DPW. Our success in moving the agency forward would not be possible without the encouragement and support I have received from this committee and you, Madam Chair. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your help throughout the year.

FY 2005 Agency Accomplishments

At the recent Citizen Summit IV – Raising All Communities, more than 2,000 residents acknowledged that the top two “signs that the city has improved” were (1) that the city is cleaner and (2) that trash and recycling services are consistent. I know that this information, Madam Chair, is music to us both. This sentiment underscores the importance of DPW services to the quality of life in the District. Each day, DPW collects trash and recyclables from approximately 21,000 residences, keeps clean more than 300 miles of roadways, disposes of more than 1,420 tons of trash, provides parking enforcement for more than 20,000 regulated parking spaces, and maintains more than 3,000 pieces of mobile equipment in operational condition.

Large and small successes are realized every day. However, there were several efforts in FY 2005 that deserve special mention.

First, I’d like to say a few words about DPW’s improved delivery of scheduled services. DPW received 180,586 service requests through the Mayor’s Citywide Call Center in FY 2005. This total breaks down to almost 700 calls per day. These calls run the gamut from requests for parking enforcement, to reports of illegal dumping, to scheduling a bulk collection appointment.

While historically one of the Department’s strengths, DPW has once again improved its on-time response rate to these requests in FY 2005, completing 92.1% of the service requests within published timeframes. This response rate is up from 88.5% in FY 2004. In short, we continue to get better at doing what we promise to do, when we promise to do it.

Madam Chair, you will be pleased to hear that DPW has brought another previously contracted service in-house. We will again be **cleaning the 75 miles of National Highway System roadways within DC city limits with DPW crews.**

For the past five years, roadway sweeping, mowing, litter control, poster and graffiti abatement, and emergency response activities on these roadways were performed by a contractor for DDOT. Beginning in FY 2006, DPW received funding to assume these functions and to also fill several gaps in our street cleaning services. Roadways in this initiative include such high visibility streets as I-295, Kenilworth Avenue and New York Avenue.

In fact, in the last month, DPW crews have collected 32,900 pounds of trash from the I-295 corridor alone. Some neighborhoods are also getting additional services thanks to this initiative. Neighborhoods that gained street cleaning service on their commercial corridors include Columbia Heights, Deanwood and Takoma Park.

I believe that one of our outstanding accomplishments in FY 2005 was in the area of residential recycling. DPW took aggressive steps toward getting this program back on track.

Beginning in January 2005, DPW converted the residential recycling program from dual stream to single stream collection **and** we switched from contracted to in-house delivery of service. This overhaul of the recycling program has already yielded tangible results. By the end of the year, participation, tonnage and revenue from the sale of recyclable materials were up and service complaints were down. The results are impressive:

- 26,597 tons of materials were collected for recycling in FY 2005, a 21.8% increase over FY 2004.
- Additionally, in FY 2005, over 2,000 tons of leaves were composted; representing 25% of the leaves we collect each fall. This past leaf season (FY 2006) we did even better, composting more than 50% of the leaves we collected.
- A quick analysis of FY 2005 shows that while our trash tonnage remained constant with FY 2004 totals, the amount of recyclables grew. This means that our residents are opting to recycle more in proportion to the amount of materials they throw away than they have in the past. I attribute this trend to the convenience and visibility of the blue carts, and to the fact that DPW crews are actually collecting the recyclables on schedule.
- In FY 2005, the sale of the recyclables we collect yielded the District \$880,064. This revenue offsets some of our expenditures for the recycling program. Through January this year, we have already offset our costs by \$439,021 from the sale of what we collect.

To further our gains in FY 2006, DPW will launch visible outreach campaigns focusing on two specific themes – recycling and litter. For recycling, DPW contracted with a marketing firm to develop educational ads featuring the new blue recycling carts, blown up larger than life and set in District neighborhoods. Like the direction finder often seen on maps, the ad’s tag line announces “Recycling Is Here.”

The ads have already been installed in neighborhood Metro Rail stations including Anacostia, Benning Road, Brookland, Eastern Market, Congress Heights, Georgia Avenue, and Shaw. The ads are also on the sides of Metro Buses.

The goal of the campaign is to raise the visibility of recycling and encourage residents to recycle more. DPW will evaluate the campaign's success by measuring the amount of materials diverted for recycling.

The 2nd prong of the campaign will promote an anti-littering message. A 2005 study completed for the New Jersey Clean Communities Council found that 75% of the persons deliberately littering along urban streets were between 6 and 24 years of age and predominately male.

The study also indicated that paid advertising programs targeting specific age groups were the most cost effective way to prevent littering from occurring (\$.02 per item) and that government litter collection programs were the most expensive (\$1.29 per item).

While these results may not be identical for the District of Columbia, they do provide enough evidence to suggest that simply providing more and more litter collection crews is not the way to eliminate the problem. To that end, DPW is launching a public education campaign designed to raise awareness of trash issues later this year that we hope will extend beyond FY 2006.

DPW's **Parking Services** program also made huge strides in FY 2005, in part due to the application of technologies that have improved operations across the board.

An improved lot management system is responsible for DPW's successful consolidation of two operations at the Blue Plains Impoundment lot, saving the city almost \$1 million in annual lease payments.

Also, in FY 2005, our process improvements helped us reduce the cycle time for removing abandoned vehicle from public space. As a result, we are now able to meet our service standard – which is removal within 13 days – more than 85% of the time. However, I certainly wouldn't want to look at an abandoned car on my block for 13 days. We met the standard, now it's time to raise the bar. In FY 2006, I have directed Parking Services staff to reduce that time to five business days.

Also in FY 2005, DPW implemented a pilot program to help alleviate downtown traffic congestion. Approximately 30 specially trained traffic enforcement officers direct rush hour traffic at targeted downtown intersections. Between morning and evening rush hours, the same officers enforce regulations that have the most impact on downtown congestion, such as double-parking.

By preventing bottlenecks and excessive idling caused by double-parking, the officers are facilitating the movement of people and vehicles through downtown. AND, they're helping the environment by keeping the air we breathe a little cleaner.

I am happy to report that we have heard a number of very favorable reports about this program from organizations such as the Downtown BID and the Golden
| Triangle BID.

We at DPW are also very proud of our accomplishments this year with the **DOES Project Empowerment program**. The main goal of Project Empowerment is to move difficult to employ District residents into a sustainable work environment.

DPW's sanitation services operation is uniquely suited to this goal. Success in sanitation services is not based on one's professional credentials but based on one's willingness to work.

We have found that many of the Project Empowerment participants have demonstrated this quality. At any given time, we have more than 30 participants performing a variety of field and office functions.

And when possible, we place participants onto the permanent payroll. We have already hired more than 60 participants into full-time DPW jobs since our work with Project Empowerment began. As an example, during the recently completed leaf collection season, we had 29 Project Empowerment participants. Nearly 50% (14 people) have been hired into DPW positions, with an additional 5 participants awaiting placement. This program is truly a win-win situation for all involved.

Going forward, DPW is set to launch a Labor-Management partnership in conjunction with DCPS that provides high school students with the opportunity to earn credit towards their community service requirements for graduation. These credits will be earned by volunteering to work with DPW's Solid Waste Education and Enforcement Program (SWEEP) on weekend neighborhood cleanup projects and community education efforts.

With the support of this committee, **the ongoing Fleet Replacement program has become a DPW success story.** Over the past several budget cycles, the District has wisely chosen to institutionalize equipment replacement as a routine fixed cost.

Each year, DPW's Fleet Management Administration initiates procurement for approximately \$10 million in vehicles and equipment citywide. This replenishment program is especially key for DPW services. In just the past few years, we have rehabilitated and replaced our aging fleet so that now more than 96% of our mission critical equipment falls within industry "useful life" standards. Having the proper fleet is one of the primary reasons for the scheduled service improvements we have realized.

In fact, DPW's Fleet operation was just named one of the 100 Best Fleets in North America by Fleet Equipment Magazine. Although we were chosen for the top 100 out of 36,000 fleet departments, we are still not satisfied. One of my FY 2006 initiatives is to work with the Fleet Management program to better respond to the needs of our user agencies and to improve the quality of the work they perform. This initiative is already underway.

FY 2006 Agency Challenges –Facilities:

Even with these successes and new initiatives, we also face challenges. DPW will soon be evicted from two of its solid waste management deployment yards, both located in the middle of the Anacostia Waterfront development zone. Our search for replacement facilities has yielded no real promising leads. In anticipation of the need for new field locations, DPW has proposed in the past several capital budget cycles a plan to consolidate most of the operations at our two large

campuses at W Street and West Virginia Avenue. We are hopeful that this plan and our other capital facility requests will receive funding in FY 2007.

On a positive note, we have successfully completed the renovation of the Benning Road transfer station. This project has transformed a makeshift facility into a state of the art transfer station that has been highlighted in several of the solid waste trade journals. Unfortunately, delays in the renovation of the Benning Road site forced the delay of renovations at the Fort Totten transfer station. As you may know, the Fort Totten Trash Transfer Station has not received major renovations since its opening in 1975 and the building literally has holes in the exterior walls that are visible from the Metro Red line.

As this committee will recall, the renovation of both Fort Totten and Benning Road stations was promised by the District as part of the October 2002 agreement with Waste Management and Browning Ferris Industries to close their private sector waste transfer stations.

Now that we are ready to proceed with the work at Fort Totten, the construction bids have come in higher than we originally budgeted. To ensure that the work is completed, DPW is reprogramming the funds from the Bryant Street facility to this project. Madam Chair, we will need your assistance in expediting the reprogramming request.

CLOSING

In closing, Madam Chair and members of the Committee, I feel that DPW is growing stronger and continuing to make progress. Every year, we move a little closer to achieving my vision for this agency and this city. It is my hope and

intention that through hard work and continued partnership with this Council, the Administration and our residents, DPW will make the District the cleanest city in America. I think that's a vision we all share.

Thank you for your time this morning. We will be happy to answer any questions you may have.